

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 002366

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/PPC, AND DRL
STATE PASS AID/LAC
NSC FOR SHANNON AND MADISON
LABOR FOR ILAB
TREASURY FOR OASIA-LAMONICA
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION
USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2009

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTION #37: SECURITY AN ISSUE, OAS ON
SITE, LEONEL LEADS

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 2294

Classified By: Classified by Acting ECOPOL Counselor Thomas Pierce. Reason: 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) This is no. 37 in our series on the Dominican presidential election:

(U) Election Security at Stake, OAS Observers Active, Leonel Still Leads

(SBU) At 30 days before the election, the violent deaths of two persons in the campaign prompted the big three presidential candidates to sign an agreement, endorsed by civil society, to curb the use of guns and rum at party rallies and to respect democratic rules. The OAS observer mission, on its second official visit this week, has -- with the Ambassador's support -- persuaded the Central Election Board (JCE) to test the JCE computer network's immunity against hackers. The latest polls continue to place ex-president Leonel Fernandez far ahead of his rivals.

(SBU) Reacting to a shootout in a low-income Santo Domingo neighborhood during campaign activities April 11, which killed two persons and wounded at least five others, the three candidates -- encouraged by national mediator Mons. Agripino Nunez of the civil society "Monitoring Committee" -- signed April 16 a "Commitment for a civilized election campaign and the strengthening of democracy" at a ceremony with heavy press coverage. This pact commits the signers to:
-- Not interfere in each other's party activities with violence or intimidation;
-- Respect institutions, cooperating with the JCE, keeping the military out of politics, and playing by the rules;
-- Instruct campaign managers to have as many meetings as necessary to ensure their subordinates carry out this agreement; and
-- Accept as witnesses the Monitoring Committee, business and labor groups, churches, and the (U.S.-funded) NGOs "Citizens' Participation" and "Foundation for Institutionalality and Justice."

(SBU) The campaign until now has been less violent than in previous years, particularly 1994 when the toll was reported to have reached 40 dead and over 100 injured. The April 16 accord, if implemented, could help maintain the downward trend. That said, the press reported that on April 17 two exchanges of small arms fire in connection with campaign activities left six persons injured, one seriously.

(C) OAS observer mission chief Santiago Murray and four experts, met with GODR authorities, political parties, and civil society organizations this week and briefed donor embassies (the European Union, Canada, and the United States) at the Ambassador's residence April 14. According to Murray, the JCE had been performing satisfactorily "so far" in organizing the elections and responding to problems and criticisms. Murray had pressed the JCE to conduct an advance test of the computer system for reporting election returns and its security against hackers and others who might try to tamper with the results. The Ambassador supported this proposal with JCE President Luis Arias, and the JCE subsequently announced that the test would take place April 24.

(C) At an outbrief with us April 18, Murray expressed his concern about use of government resources to support President Mejia's re-election bid. After receiving a document from Leonel Fernandez's PLD with detailed allegations, Murray spoke with President Mejia and warned him against blatant abuses, such as an announced distribution of new motorcycles to "motoconcho" taxi drivers slated to begin April 29 with Mejia present. Murray told the President that, if he appeared at this event, the OAS mission would criticize him publicly. Mejia protested, but finally agreed not to attend.

(SBU) Recent polls continue to show Leonel Fernandez (PLD) with a commanding lead over President Mejia (PRD) and Eduardo Estrella (PRSC) and a possibility of winning in the first round. A poll by the Spanish firm Noxa Consulting March 22-26 gave Fernandez 59 percent of voter intentions, Mejia 22, and Estrella 18; if a second round were needed, Fernandez would win 66-23 over Mejia and 57-35 over Estrella. A Costa Rican CID poll, with data from March 23-31, gave Leonel 55 percent, Mejia 26, and Estrella 19. Whether Leonel will sustain this momentum to clear the high bar (50 percent plus one vote) required for a first-round victory remains to be seen; a new poll is expected to be published soon.

(SBU) Speeches by President Mejia on fighting corruption and by PRSC candidate Estrella on his economic proposals (septel), both on April 14, injected a bit more substance into the campaign -- but neither party has yet published a campaign platform. Leonel Fernandez's PLD published its platform recently (reftel).

12. (U) Drafted by Leticia Cantu and Bainbridge Cowell.

13. (U) This report and others in this series can be read on the SIPRNET at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/index.cfm> along with extensive other current material.
HERTELL